
Media Release

CONTACT:**Don Rhodes, 213/236-1840****Jeff Lustgarten, 323/466-3445****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****April 6, 2006****SCAG, MEXICALI MAYOR ANNOUNCE BI-NATIONAL HEARING
TO EXPLORE INTEGRATED TRANSPORTATION, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

LOS ANGELES – Mexicali Mayor Samuel Enrique Ramos Flores joined Southern California's elected leadership to announce an unprecedented bi-national hearing on April 26th to explore the emerging integration of transportation infrastructure and economic development opportunities on both sides of the border. Trade, transportation, economic development, goods movement, drug trafficking, public health, environmental and public safety are among the issues that will be discussed at the April 26th hearing. Today's announcement, coordinated by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), is part of a larger effort to develop strategic relationships throughout the Southwestern United States and Northern Mexico.

"We have managed to define clearly our interest in productivity and a high amount of resources and academic prestige. We will be a model for cooperation in planning for the whole world," stated Mexicali Mayor Samuel Enrique Ramos Flores.

"Due to increased global trade, Mexico has become an integral part of the economic development of Southern California and the nation," stated Victor Carrillo, Imperial County Supervisor and SCAG Regional Councilmember. "I look forward to a continued collaboration with the Mayor of Mexicali as well as other leaders throughout the Border Region in this important effort to ensure that we are collectively prepared for the future that awaits us."

The Southwest Compact represents a natural extension of recent efforts to bolster goods movement in Southern California and neighboring areas. By identifying priority infrastructure improvements and forging economic links among leaders in the U.S. (California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas) and in six Mexican states (Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas), the Southwest Compact would foster a 'mega region' with the size, diversity, industrial strength and geographic advantages to be a competitive force internationally.

The Southwest gateway forms a unique international trade region, receiving the majority of imports from the Pacific Rim for the entire United States. The Los Angeles and Long Beach port

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complex is already the fifth largest in the world, and the amount of cargo arriving from the Pacific Rim is expected to triple at the region's ports by 2030.

One specific improvement is a regional bypass from Mexico to California, possibly utilizing Route 86. Pisano suggested that transportation infrastructure could be financed through such measures as public-private partnerships or changes to zoning and land use.

Last fall, nearly 100 elected officials, business leaders and transportation experts from Southern California, Arizona and Mexico convened for a hearing in Calexico to foster greater cross-border cooperation by identifying joint transportation infrastructure improvements and economic development opportunities.

"There are overwhelming efficiencies in global economies, including streamlining transportation, increased productivity, encouraging cost-sharing measures, and sustainable planning for population growth," stated Mark Pisano, SCAG executive director. "Establishing a trade bloc with Mexico and a seamless logistics industry will best position our region to compete with Europe and Asia."

"Our intent is to build momentum around the notion of collaboration among the border states to identify common economic objectives and develop more effective trade corridors," said Toni Young, councilmember of Port Hueneme and president of SCAG.

"Through this hearing, elected and business leaders in the border states will be laying the foundation to transform this region into a true economic powerhouse," said El Centro City Councilmember Jon Edney, a SCAG leader in the efforts to hold the bi-national hearing.

"If we can build upon today's event and forge new constructive working relationships between the political leadership on both sides of the border, we can really transform the collective future of our respective areas," said Greg Pettis, Cathedral City Councilmember and Chair of SCAG's Southwest Compact Task Force.

For more information about April 26th Bi-National hearing, please call Don Rhodes at 213/236-1840 or Dan Witzling at 323/466-3445.